

# critical digest

Vol. III No. 10

November 6, 1950

The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

## New York Openings This Week

The Lady's Not For Burning-Royale, 11/8/50. Christopher Fry comedy with an all English cast headed by John Gielgud and Pamela Brown. Produced by the Theatre Guild, directed by Mr. Gielgud...The Country Girl-Lyceum, 11/10/50. Paul Kelly and Uta Hagen star in a play written and directed by Clifford Odets. Produced by Dwight Deere Wiman.

## Daily Reviewers Rate the New Plays

Hilda Crane-Coronet, 11/1/50. Samson Raphaelson's drama of the problems of an unsuccessful career woman won solid support of eight reviewers. Times, Herald Tribune and Compass critics didn't think the title character interesting enough, or the solution believable. "Brilliant" was adjective applied to portrayal by Jessica Tandy. Supporting players received praise. Direction of Hume Cronyn was deemed perfect. Several who liked play did think that solution was weak. Three critics noted that play should appeal especially to female matinee audiences. Chapman, News, placed show in hit class when he called it "the season's sex drama." Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, considered it a powerful play filled with shattering comment on our time. Producer Arthur Schwartz' first non-musical attempt was credited for its good taste. The featured actors are Beulah Bondi, Evelyn Varden, Frank Sundstrom and John Alexander.

The Day After Tomorrow-Booth, 10/26/50. Three outright "pros", plus three mild "cons" were credited in favor of the new Frederick Lonsdale comedy by the daily men. Critics of Compass, World-Telegram & Sun, and Newark News, Brooklyn Eagle and Women's Wear Daily admitted the comedy of manners had its moments, but not enough to fill an entertaining evening. The remainder termed play merely a rewrite of earlier comedies by the author-director. Melville Cooper walked off with acting honors. Several felt Cooper could do no wrong, but they wished he had better material. Beatrice Pearson and Ralph Michael also were given credit with doing as good a job as possible under the circumstances. McClain, subbing for Garland, Journal-American rated it a double zero. Coleman, Mirror, blamed English literary austerity for the lack of a funny script.

Weekly Critics View the Shows -- additional digests on back page.

The Curious Savage-Martin Beck, 10/24/50. Francis, Billboard, and Gabriel, Cue, enjoyed the wacky madness in John Patrick's story of life in an insane asylum; but the rest agreed with the daily reviewers who claimed play was in bad taste and unfunny. Several liked Lillian Gish, but most found proceedings embarrassing. Cue critic wrote that play was made out of "sheer Milne and molasses." While Hobe, Variety, billed it as heartless, silly and boring.

Mrs. Warren's Profession-Bleecker St. Playhouse, 10/25/50. Two scenes plus two performances by Estelle Winwood and Louisa Horton make the Shaw revival by Theatre Venture worth the trip downtown agreed Hobe, Variety and Marshall, Nation. Cue and Time critics didn't think that the two scenes were enough to overcome the dozens of dull ones.

## Editorial Pros and Cons

Professional sentiment has always been a well paying commodity in show business. New national industry of presenting impersonations and reminiscences of Al Jolson is latest item in trend. Better yet is the genius who got the Broadway building owners to dim their marquee lights for one minute in honor of George Bernard Shaw. Such stunts done in the best of bad taste almost cancel millions of words of honest sincerity issued on the passing of these entertainment leaders.

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# - - - - - ' A Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance ' - - - - -

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

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|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. NY Times                | 11. Newark News         | 21. Catholic World  |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune       | 12. Women's Wear Daily  | 22. Commonweal      |
| 3. NY News                 | 13. Daily Worker        | 23. Cue             |
| 4. NY Mirror               | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (PM, Star)   | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat.Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post                 | 16. George Jean Nathan  | 26. Newsweek        |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse)      | 17. Morning Telegraph   | 27. Time            |
| 8. NY Journal American     | 18. Variety             | 28. Nation          |
| 9. NY World-Telegram & Sun | 19. Billboard           | 29. New Republic    |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle         | 20. Theatre Arts        | 30. New Yorker      |

Affairs of State-Royale, 9/25/50. Pro: 11 votes. Con: 1-6-7-10-11-12-14-16-20-22-24-25-26-29.

Arms and the Man-Arena, 10/26/50. Pro: 4-10-11-12-18-23. Con: 1-2-3-5-6-7-8-9-14-15-26.

Black Chiffon-48th St.Theatre, 9/27/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 2-3-14-22-27-29.

Call Me Madam-Imperial, 10/12/50. Pro: 22 votes. Con: 19-28-29. So-So: 3.

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 1-9-13-14-22-25-29. So-So: 16-30.

The Curious Savage-Martin Beck, 10/24/50. Pro: 3-5-6-9-11-14-15-19-23. Con: 1-2-7-8-10-13-18-26-27-30. So-So: 4-12.

The Day After Tomorrow-Booth, 10/26/50. Pro: 5-9-11. Con: 1-2-3-4-6-8-10-12.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-12-28. So-So: 16-19-22-23-27.

The Gicconda Smile-Fulton, 10/7/50. Pro: 3-9-10-11-12-14-15-28. Con: 1-2-4-5-6-7-8-17-18-19-22-23-26-27-30.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-25-26-27-28-30.

Kiss Me Kate-Shubert, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 16. So-So: 2-22-30

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Mrs. Warren's Profession-Bleecker St.Playhouse, 10/25/50. Pro: 1-5-6-7-8-10-12-18-23-28. Con: 2-3-4-9-11-27.

Pardon Our French-Broadway, 10/5/50. Pro: 10-11-12-15-18. Con: 2-3-4-6-7-14-16-19-21-23-26-27-30. So-So: 1-5-8-9.

Peep Show-Winter Garden, 6/28/50. Pro: 11 votes. Con: 1-2-12-16-20-26-27-28-29-30. So-So: 3-14-18.

Peter Pan-St.James, 4/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 8-13-16-30. So-So: 6-14-19.

Season in the Sun-Cort, 9/28/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 10-12-24-28. So-So: 11.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 27. So-So: 23.

Tickets Please-Coronet, 4/27/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 11-16-27-30. So-So: 26.

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' Green Room Department '  
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**SITUATION LOONEY...**Broadway playwrights are determined to convince the play goer that the only nice people at large in our society are as crazy as loons, objects Inez Robb, Journal American. Just ordinary people with all their buttons don't have a chance. The plays are written about Elwood Dowds and residents of madhouses. She is also fed up with plays laid in low class bars and plays filled with refugees from Alcoholics Anonymous. Normalcy is a repugnant commodity on Broadway.

**ONE BIG UNION...**One all-inclusive theatre union including actors, stage hands, authors and managers was suggested by Harold Clurman at New School Associates dinner forum.

**HOW TO BE A DIRECTOR...**Three cents theatre university conducted by Chapman, News, gave precise instructions for would-be directors. First he must keep ahead of the cast by reading the entire play. Then he must spend several days reading aloud his own version of the author's work. Next he must act out the entire script by himself, keeping a horsewhip handy if some of the cast decides to laugh in the wrong places. Finally when the actors are given a chance he treats them as pawns on a chessboard.

**SWEET AND LOW DOWN...**Rumors of an operatic version of Tobacco Road with a Leonard Bernstein score were classified in the "This-We-Can-Do-Without-Department" by Gardner, Herald Tribune.

**CLICKS FROM CLUCKS...**Rose, News, saluted New York drama reviewers, "the gents who separate the clicks from the clucks." But he is glad he isn't one of them. This is why he was able to see the fun rather than the flaws in Call Me Madam. The Columnist-Producer thinks the critics are a "smart set of hombres, and the cultural itching powder they spread around has a lot to do with our theatre being up to scratch."

**HAYES AS SADIE...**Morehouse, WT&S, urged the City Center to consider opening their theatrical season with Helen Hayes as Sadie Thompson in Rain. She could give fire, poignance and pathos to the role. He recalled that Edward Shelton used to urge her to play Lady Macbeth.

**PRESS AGENTS PLAN...**ATPAM plans to promote theatre on nation-wide basis, which have already been set in motion by League of New York theatres, received backing of Burr, Playbill. He pointed out ways that suggestions in the report could be incorporated with work already being handled by ANTA.

**ADVANCE TIPS ON HITS...**Better order your tickets now for Bless You All suggests Coleman, Mirror. He also issued advance warnings on Out of This World and Guys and Dolls. Latter two have large advance sales.

**PARK PLAYS...**Enlarging on suggestions of presenting Equity Library plays in the city parks, Clarence Derwent, Equity president, detailed idea in Show Business. Admissions would be set at 25 cents, 50 cents and \$1.00. The first show to be tried might be Midsummer's Night Dream. Other Shakespearean plays also lend themselves to outdoor productions.

**COULDN'T SAY NO...**Because a theatrical producer couldn't say no, a dozen actresses believe they have the leading role in a new show, reports McCord, Herald Trib.

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' Random Notes '  
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Shows that closed include Burning Bright, The Consul, Daphne Laureola and Legend of Sarah...Theatre Guild to make available subscription plans in 20 cities to other producers...Lee Shubert may become a partner in Show of the Month Club...Gertrude Lawrence presented American Theatre Wing plaque to Treasury Department...Tallulah Bankhead signed with Columbia lecture bureau.



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' Interview Round Up '  
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SAMSON RAPHAELSON...Hilda Crane author enjoyed the weeks of production for his current play he admitted to Rice, Post. Working with producer Arthur Schwartz, lead Jessica Tandy and director Hume Cronyn was an experience. There never was the vicious interplay of egos usually found in the theatre.

NORMAN DEL MAR...Musical conductor of Let's Make an Opera will have his hands full each evening Pollock, Compass, discovered. His role will be as the musical director of the cast and the audience which helps make the opera. Ad libs of cast can be rehearsed, but ad libs for audience will have to be different each night. How the first nighters will cooperate in the singing is anyone's guess.

PETER COOKSON...Producer of Lily Henry believes more playwrights of promising talent should be subsidized, he told Theatre News Weekly. The many foundations which help singers, actors and painters should take a more active interest in the theatre. At present writers with no income are forced to go into radio or television to survive.

JOHN CHAPMAN...Daily News critic and editor of Best Plays of 1949-1950 enjoys the responsibility of reporting on the new plays to his readers he told ABC Mary Mar Margaret McBride. But he doesn't like the responsibility involved in deciding if a play will be a hit or a flop. The theatre should be so organized economically that a play can actually ignore the reviews.

LOUISA HORTON...Featured actress in Mrs. Warren's Profession expressed delight in being allowed to appear in a Shaw play she told NBC Hi Jinx. It makes you a much finer person than you were before.

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' Weekly Reviewers Rate the Shows '  
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Call Me Madam-Imperial, 10/12/50. Kerr, Commonweal, and Brown, SRL, praised Irving Berlin musical starring Le Merman. Former had two objections. He thought the star should have shared bows with Russell Nye for the "You're Just in Love" number. And he considered the campaign song for Eisenhower in extremely bad taste. Marshall, Nation, and Francis, Billboard, thought the giant musical with book by Lindsay and Crouse, just wasn't good. This in spite of the presence of Ethel Merman.

Affairs of State-Music Box, 9/25/50. Theatre Arts and Brown, SRL, panned the French play starring Celeste Holm. Latter thought script was based on an impossible situation that no adult could believe.

The Gioconda Smile-Fulton, 10/7/50. Entire production of Aldous Huxley's play was taken to task by Clurman, New Republic. The play was cast so badly that any values the work might have had were lost. He even disliked the scenery, thinking it gave the wrong kind of atmosphere to the play.

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' Chit Chat '  
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Broadway press agents are being hired to promote the slick magazines via the columns...Bert Lytell reelected Shepherd of Lambs...Ben Hecht published and edited "Who's Who in Show Business"...New Haven Railroad running show train for Pardon Our French...Vernon Rice will lecture at Contemporary Arts Gallery on "Art in the Theatre"...Robert E. Sherwood will receive honorary degree from Canada's Bishop University..."Counterattack" listed denials of Meg Munday, Irene Wicker and Samson Raphaelson to the newsletter's charge that they are Communists...Minneapolis night clubs will offer 90 minute versions of musical comedies...Cast of Oberammergau Passion Play earned \$400,000...Season in the Sun and Black Chiffon only two plays that have interested Hollywood so far this season...MGM records scooped the field by getting out first long playing records of songs from Call Me Madam and Guys and Dolls.

